
**NEXUS BETWEEN COOPERATIVE SOCIETY AND POVERTY
ALLEVIATION IN EKITI STATE**

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Abstract

This study assessed the nexus between cooperative society and poverty alleviation in Ekiti state. The descriptive research design was adopted in the study. A well-designed questionnaire was used to collect primary data, which was then analyzed using descriptive analysis and ordinary least square regression. The study's findings revealed that cooperative societies and poverty alleviation in Ekiti State have a positive relationship. The study also ascertained that cooperative societies have over time suffered several critical level of financial and economic challenges that has exerted negative influence on the sustainability of its finances. The government, through appropriate agencies should provide loans with favorable terms and conditions to cooperative societies and cooperative societies should boost their periodic donation collection in order to obtain sufficient funding.

Keywords: Nexus, Cooperative Society, Poverty Alleviation.

1.0. INTRODUCTION

When people are totally vulnerable and incapable to influence even their own lives, the essence of cooperative societies have demonstrated increasing significance towards the position and development of the society. Cooperative societies describe an effective and advantageous economic option capable of reviving the hopes of common people all over the world (Ruhul & Mohammed, 2014). Cooperative societies are established to satisfy people's mutual needs. Also, the belief that together, a group of people can attain goals that none of them can achieve individually has been the drive for the consolidation of the influence of cooperatives in the society. As a matter of fact, for over 16 decades, cooperative societies have succeeded in helping people to command impressive economic position (Agarwal & Gort, 1996). Cooperative societies are completely committed to achieving transparency, social responsibility and concern for one another. Ruhul and Mohammed (2014) asserted that cooperative societies represent no discriminatory organization as membership is open to anyone who satisfies the unbiased requirements. They further maintained that the non-governmental organization possesses numerous social responsibility and economic gains are equally distributed according to member's level of participation in the society.

Cooperative societies may be grouped into varieties such as producers, workers, consumers, sellers, purchasing, housing, credit and thrift and farmers' cooperative. They are non-governmental organizations driven by the quest to satisfy the economic needs of its members. They adopt approaches aimed at attaining one or more economic goals in the global economy (Tofael, 2012). In this way, several international agencies including the African Union, International Labour Organization, International Cooperative Alliance, United nations, European Union, Economic Communities of West African States and other Nigerian based agencies have

affirmed that the activities of cooperative societies have exerted a significant influence on the alleviation of poverty all over the world (International Cooperative Alliance & International Labour Organization, 2003; Wanyama, Delveltre & Pollet, 2008).

The existence of cooperative societies is unarguably a significant approach to causing economic development; this is so because they organize local resources to meet the needs of an appreciable number of people particularly in local communities where poverty persists (Pearse, 2014). However, despite the place and influence of cooperatives in suppressing poverty in the country, they are faced with several challenges including the lack of sound education which have occasioned the weak training and development of its members, lack of proper management, and inadequate funding among others have over the years hampered the longevity of most cooperative societies in Nigeria (Nwankwo, Ewuim and Asoya, 2012; Abell, 2004).

However, cooperative societies have over time remained in a state of change. In practically all part of the world especially Nigeria, cooperatives have suffered several crises that has negatively influenced its role of poverty reduction. These challenges among others include: substandard management, inadequate capital, issues of credibility, lack of marketing, overdue loans, illiteracy and improper planning (Ademu, Aduku, Elesho & Nweke, 2018). Based on these challenges, the rate of formation of cooperative societies have cascaded over the years as a significant number of persons have perceived the formation of cooperative societies as an impossible concept with a very high sustainability requirement (Hlatshwako, 2010). This is despite the well-recognized role of cooperative societies in driving the development of nations across the world, and the wide endorsement of the worldwide cooperative movement by the United Nations and the announcement of the year 2012 as the international year of cooperatives in the bid to recognize the place of cooperatives in social and economic development (Périlleux, 2013; Rabobank, 2012).

Although Birchall and Ketilson (2013) asserted that world over, the recognition of the role of cooperative societies have increased abundantly due to his undying resilience particularly during the times of financial crises and economic downturn. But despite this, there exists paucity in researches on the influence of cooperative society on poverty reduction, especially in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The few researches conducted in Nigeria are bereft of empirical evidences and robust analyses on this focus (Abbas 2013; Ihenacho *et al.*, 2012; Ademu *et al.*, 2018; Uzonwanne, 2015; Adekola & Dokubo, 2017; Effiom, 2014 & Pearse, 2014). Following these research gap, this study assessed the influence of cooperative societies on poverty reduction in Ekiti State, Nigeria.

2.0 Review Literature

Cooperative Society

Cooperative society is described as a group of persons that possesses common interest towards enhancing the financial and economic status of their members. Simkhada (2004) asserted that cooperative societies are microfinance institutions characterized by self-control, self-finance and dominance in communities and societies where the formal banking system has not reached. According to Sharma *et al.* (2005), cooperative societies are financial group occasioned and controlled by members towards making provision for prompt savings and credit facilities to meet

the quests of members in the society. Oluyombo (2012) maintained that the system of cooperative societies is different from the formal microfinance institutions focused on the provision of financial services to the general public.

According to Adebayo and Yusuf (2004), cooperatives are voluntary societies established, controlled and managed by members in a specific location. They are independent group of people with similar interest of establishing an enterprise that will track the numerous needs of its members. The association is a system established to improve the standard of living of individual members through enhancing their activities in the rural and urban area vis-à-vis amassing savings and provision of loans to members of the society. Oluyombo (2010) established that cooperative societies are private organizations created towards mobilizing savings and creating effective loan system for members.

Poverty Alleviation in Nigeria

Ameliorating the effect of poverty has been a universal challenge due to its complexity, influence and multi-dimensional character. Hence, there has been a growing interest over the years as regards community based remedies to curtail the existence of poverty in the society and also build individual and household confidence in the community. Pearse, (2014); United National, (2004) and Ijaiya, (2002) emphasized that these targets are intended to subdue poverty through the several pro-poor growth approaches including the mercantilist approach on foreign trade, traditional economics approaches, basic need benefits approaches, and industrial revolution which eventually failed to cause the expected change. The World Bank (2004) identified poverty reduction as an approach to enhancing the system of transferability through the recognition of assets, developing access to available credits and strengthening the allocation to cause an increased standard of living.

According to Bhardwaj (2009), poverty-reduction strategies should have the goal of overcoming psychological, social, cultural and economic barriers. In the bid to alleviate poverty, several associated forces that cause the poor to remain deprived should be tackled. Also, increasing peoples inclusion in household decision making (especially women), understanding, training and markets including other significant economic resources for income creation such as credit, adequate information, land and technology (Chikaire, Ejiogu-Okereke, Oguegbuchulam, Osuagwu & Obi, 2012). Ogwumike (2001) affirmed that over time, poverty alleviation approaches adopted in Nigeria were centered on the growth of the economic, rural development and the provision of basic needs households. These measures obviously exerted insignificant impact on poverty reduction as any given measure aimed at alleviating poverty must improve human capacities which guarantee impressive economic output and consequently enhance the standard of living of individuals and households and as a result alleviates poverty (Pearse, 2014). The effectiveness of any poverty reduction technique are identified to be capable of catalyzing a recognized property rights for informal business owners and landed property owners, improved market that enhances savings mobilization, life security, encourage a great macroeconomic position, effectual civil service delivery, medium sized governmental system, unbiased regulatory system and good governance so as to cause a noticeable reception in poverty and economic inefficiency (Dollar & Kraay, 2001). Cooperative societies especially in developing countries have noticeably contributed to the provision of financial aid, employment creation,

social welfare, and creation of symposiums for education and training including other measures targeted towards reducing socioeconomic issues connected to poverty (Tanzania Federation of Cooperation, 2006).

Uzonwanne (2015) examined co-operative organizations as a means of poverty alleviation and rural community development in Nigeria. The study employed the descriptive survey research approach. The study sampled three hundred people from the rural area of Imo state, primary data was gathered through a self-contracted questionnaire. The study ascertained that cooperative society impacts significantly on the reduction of poverty and it was also discovered that cooperative society exerts a positive influence on community development. Although it was also revealed that cooperative society has not contributed significantly to the development of vocation and skills of its members; again, it was discovered that the establishment of cooperatives will cause a change in the economy of Nigeria. Based on these discoveries, the study suggested among others that cooperative society should cause monitoring assessment teams to frequently examine the activities of its members; cooperatives should also provide draw a plan to seek for a substantial budgetary allocation for the development of cooperative members and government should also provide a registration platform for cooperatives.

Adekola and Dokubo (2017) evaluated the effect of cooperative society and poverty reduction among members for community development in River state, Nigeria. The study particularly examined the extent to which poverty reduction activities of cooperative societies on members contribute to community development in the area of study; assessed the factors that militate against the sustainability of cooperative society's poverty reduction activities for community development in the area of study and determined the possible ways in which cooperative education can be used to sustain cooperative society's poverty reduction activities for community development. The descriptive research design was adopted as data were derived using a structured questionnaire. Data collected were analyzed descriptive and results from the study showed that cooperative society have over time been empowering its members, this is despite the discovery that low capital, low level of education and corruption of cooperative heads have been the basic factors impeding the effusiveness of cooperative in Nigeria. Following these findings, the study suggested that there is a need for adequate training for cooperative members; cooperators should create a system for capital formation and government should provide educational opportunities for rural cooperators.

Abbas (2016) examined the roles of cooperative society in alleviating poverty in Yobe state, Nigeria. The qualitative and quantitative research approach was adopted. The multistage sampling technique was employed in sampling one hundred and fifty respondents for the study. Primary data was gathered using a structured questionnaire, and interview; descriptive analysis were conducted afterwards. Findings stemming from the study suggested that the operation of cooperative societies have improved the standard of living and has also reduced the level of poverty of its members through the provision of financial aids, skills, job openings and training; the study also ascertained that cooperative societies are faced with numerous changes including inadequate finance, lack of training and lack of social amenities among others. Based on these discoveries, the study suggested that strategies of cooperative societies should be consciously articulated to realistically reflect proper skills and trainings of its members; governments at all

levels should partner with friendly financial institutions to offer soft credit loans to members of cooperative societies and social welfare programmes should be designed by Federal, State and Local Governments through the provision of subsidies to poor persons especially on food, education, housing, transport, etc thereby enhancing their descent living.

The contribution of cooperative societies to economic growth in Kogi State, Nigeria, were investigated by Ademu, Aduku, Elesho, and Nweke (2018). The study looked into the contributions of co-operative societies to economic growth in the Yagba East Local Government Area, as well as the obstacles that these contributions face. The descriptive survey design was adopted as the study sampled seven hundred and fifty respondents and a structured questionnaire was used in gathering primary data. The collected data was analyzed descriptively using frequencies and percentages. It was revealed in the study that cooperative societies are faced with the issue of unsatisfactory funding and the study's result also affirmed that the main challenges faced in the establishment and operation of cooperative societies are inappropriate leadership and unsuitable management control. Following these findings, the study suggested that cooperative societies should productively use its resources; ascertain an appreciable level of management competence and capability and government should ennoble the activities and performance of cooperative by providing support services and human resource development programmes for cooperative societies.

Ihenacho, Chikaire, Ejiogu-Okereke, Oguegbuchulam, Osuagwu and Obi, (2012) examined the empowerment strategies of cooperative societies for poverty reduction among members in Imo State, Nigeria. The qualitative and quantitate research design was employed as primary data was gathered using a structured questionnaire. Descriptive statistics was adopted in analyzing data collated in the study. Findings gathered from the study demonstrates that cooperatives are a veritable tool for poverty reduction considering the services they render to people; it was also discovered that cooperatives empower people by creating employment for members, facilitate financial services, give members educational support, social protection, marketing services, mutual aids and labour exchange. However, the study affirmed that cooperatives are faced with numerous challenges including low literacy rate, limited finance, poor leadership, unskilled management personnel among others. Premise on these findings, the study advocated for a recognition and support for cooperatives by governments and non-governmental agencies.

Agbaeze and Onwuka (2014) assessed the impact of micro-credit on poverty alleviation in Nigeria. The study focused on some selected farm households in Enugu East Local Government of Nigeria. In the bid to attain the aim of the study, primary data as regards the sources and access to microcredit, the issue of poverty, its effect and height among the selected rural households were collected using a structured questionnaire. Data gathered in the study were analyzed descriptively and inferentially. Result from the study revealed that the level of poverty is still high among the rural dwellers but the few that have access to microcredit lives a standard live relative to those that have no access to microcredit. The study then concluded that access to micro-credit has positive but not significant impact on poverty alleviation among the rural populace. The authors following their findings, recommended that the government should further give a place to cooperatives in its financial plans and interest rates charged on funds provided to cooperatives should be flexible.

Abamagal (2017) assessed the impact of cooperatives on poverty reduction. The study focused on Hadiya Farmers' cooperative union in Hadiya Zone in Ethiopia. The qualitative and quantitative research design was employed as the study sampled one hundred and seventy households in the study area. Primary data were collated using a structured questionnaire while secondary data were amassed from the cooperative union. The study's data was examined using descriptive and econometric analyses (logit model). The findings from the study demonstrate that cooperative exerts a noticeable impact on rural household poverty. Premise on this finding, the study suggested that the membership of cooperative amongst farmers and households in the study area should be further promoted and deepened.

The socio-economic influence of cooperative societies in Bangladesh was studied empirically by (Ruhul & Mohammed, 2014; Mukit *et al.*, 2020). Primary data was obtained from fifty respondents using a descriptive survey design. The descriptive statistics were used to analyze the primary data collected. The study's findings showed that cooperative societies play an important role in community growth by assisting registered members in increasing their standard of living. The authors have highlighted the problems that have led many cooperatives to operate in an inconsistent. According to the findings of the report, a national cooperative awareness campaign stressing the value of creating cooperatives with acceptable socioeconomic characteristics should be coordinated, and cooperative development agencies should be located near cooperative societies.

Zikalala (2016) examined the role of savings and credit cooperatives in promoting access to credit in Swaziland. Specifically, the study determine the level of outreach of savings and credit cooperatives in Swaziland, including the level of penetration and the quality of financial services provided; assessed the level of sustainability of savings and credit cooperatives in Swaziland, including economic, financial and social sustainability and identified the challenges faced by SACCOs in providing financial services and to propose measures for enhancing their performance. Using a qualitative and quantitative research design, the study gathered primary data from thirty-eight savings and credit cooperatives in the study area using an interview. Findings from the study revealed that cooperative societies have despite its penetration and influence in the society have failed to meet up with international standard on the required financial sustainability; this according to the findings is caused by the low height of management skills of cooperative members and competition from commercial banks. Based on these findings, the study suggested among others that Savings and credit cooperatives should dedicate a certain portion of their annual budget to educating their members; Savings and credit cooperatives should evolve and adapt to current times by hiring top talent management and cooperatives' boards should devise strategic plans on how to better advertise and market the cooperatives so that they are able to recruit new members to replace those that have resigned

3.0 Research Methods

This study adopted the descriptive research design. The study targeted members of cooperative societies registered and operating in Ekiti state. Random sampling technique was adopted in selecting one hundred and fifty (150) cooperative members in Ekiti state. A five-point likert scale questionnaire was adopted for the survey conducted in the study. Data gathered in the study was estimated using descriptive analysis and ordinary least square regression.

4.0 Data Analysis and Discussion

Table 1: Demographic Data of Respondents

Variable	Detail	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	103	68.7
	Female	47	31.3
Total		150	100.0
Occupation	Civil Servant	27	18.0
	Academic	42	28.0
	Business Person	31	20.7
	Farmer	50	33.3
Total		150	100.0
Occupational Experience	1-5 Years	38	25.3
	6-10 Years	77	51.3
	11-15 Years	20	13.3
	15 Years & Above	15	10.0
	Total	150	100.0
Educational Qualification	Diploma/SSCE	53	35.3
	Bachelors Degree	33	22.0
	Masters Degree	27	18.0
	Doctoral Degree	37	24.7
Total		150	100.0
Respondents Cooperative Society Membership	Ekiti State University Multipurpose Cooperative Society	109	72.7
	IgimokogoAtecoFadama Farmers' Cooperative Multipurpose Society	41	27.3
Total		150	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2019

The above table 1 reflects the demographic details of respondents who participated in the study. The table indicates that 69.7% of the total respondents are male while 31.3% are female; this implies that gender bias had no place in the survey. Also indicated in the table is the occupation of respondents, it is noticed from table 1 that academics and farmers dominates the respondents of the study with 28% and 33.3% respective portion of the total respondents. Again, the study determined that 25.3% possesses 1-5 years' experience in their occupation, 51.3% possesses 6-10 years' experience, 13.3% are with 11-15 years' experience while 10% are with experience of 15 years and above. Furthermore, it is revealed from table 1 above that 35.3% of the total respondents have Diploma or Secondary School Certificate, 22% are first degree graduates, 18% are Masters graduate while 24.7% are Ph.D holders. Lastly, the study ascertained that

respondents are members of at least a cooperative society in Ekiti State, particularly 72.7% are members of Ekiti State University Multipurpose Cooperative Society while 27.3% are members of Igimokogo Ateco Fadama Farmers' Cooperative Multipurpose Society.

Table 2: Challenges Faced by Cooperative Societies in Eradicating Poverty

S/N	Demographics		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	Funds available with the society to discharge their roles are very limited.	Strongly Agree	41	27.3	27.3	27.3
		Agree	75	50.0	50.0	77.3
		Undecided	21	14.0	14.0	91.3
		Disagree	12	8.0	8.0	99.3
		Strongly Disagree	1	.7	.7	100.0
		Total	150	100	100	
2	Cooperative societies have over time benefited the rich members in the society instead of the poor.	Strongly Agree	26	17.3	17.3	17.3
		Agree	37	24.7	24.7	42.0
		Undecided	15	10.0	10.0	52.0
		Disagree	53	35.3	35.3	87.3
		Strongly Disagree	19	12.7	12.7	100.0
		Total	150	100	100	
3	Staffs of cooperative societies lack adequate personnel with adequate managerial skills.	Strongly Agree	6	4.0	4.0	4.0
		Agree	15	10.0	10.0	14.0
		Undecided	7	4.7	4.7	18.7
		Disagree	86	57.3	57.3	76.0
		Strongly Disagree	36	24.0	24.0	100.0
		Total	150	100	100	
4	Funds of cooperative societies are not well accounted for by the managing committee.	Strongly Agree	16	10.7	10.7	10.7
		Agree	20	13.3	13.3	24.0
		Undecided	7	4.7	4.7	28.7
		Disagree	73	48.7	48.7	77.3
		Strongly Disagree	34	22.7	22.7	100.0
		Total	150	100	100	
5	Cooperative societies are most times controlled by political factors and domination.	Strongly Agree	7	4.7	4.7	4.7
		Agree	8	5.3	5.3	10.0
		Undecided	8	5.3	5.3	15.3
		Disagree	91	60.7	60.7	76.0
		Strongly Disagree	36	24.0	24.0	100.0
		Total	150	100	100	

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Table 2 consists of responses gathered from respondents concerning challenges faced by cooperative societies in eradicating poverty. The table specifically indicates that a cumulative of 77.4% agreed that funds available with the society to discharge their roles are very limited; about 14% indicated, a neutral position while about 8.7% supplied a neutral position. Again, the table demonstrates that a total of 42% maintained positive position to the statement that cooperative

societies have over time benefited the rich members in the society instead of the poor; about 10% were undecided while about 48% disagreed with the statement. It can also be determined from the table that about 14% agreed that staffs of cooperative societies lack adequate personnel with adequate managerial skills, about 4.7% maintained a neutral position while about 81.3% disagreed firmly. In addition, about 24% affirmed, that funds of cooperative societies are not well accounted for by the managing committee; 4.7% were undecided while 71.4% utterly disagreed with the statement. Finally, the table reflected that a cumulative of 15.3 agreed that cooperative societies are most times controlled by political factors and domination; 5.3% maintained a neutral position while a cumulative of 84.7% disagreed utterly.

Regression Analysis

Table 3: Regression Estimation Results

Dependent Variable: POA

Variable	Coefficient	Std Error	t-statistics	Prob.
C	2.489889	6.394133	0.389402	0.7006
CSO	0.917004	0.173707	5.279012	0.0000

R-square=0.547849, *Adjusted R-square*=0.528190, *F-statistics*=27.86797 *Prob (F-statistic)*=0.000023

The regression estimate revealed in table 3 indicates that cooperative society exerts positive significant influence on poverty alleviation with coefficient estimate of 0.917004 ($p=0.0000 < 0.05$). Also, the R-squared statistics showed in table 2 above stood at 0.5479 which indicates that cooperative society contributes over 54% of the variation in the alleviation of poverty in Ekiti state.

Post Estimation Test

Table 4: Post-Estimation Results

Heteroskedasticity Test		
<i>Statistics</i>	<i>Values</i>	<i>Probability</i>
F-statistic	1.455571	0.2399

Source: *Author’s Computation, (2019)*

The Heteroskedasticity test which examined the heterogeneity of the variables reported f-statistics and probability values of 1.455571 and 0.2399 also describes that there is no justification to rejecting the null hypothesis of constant variance of the error term (homoscedasticity). Therefore, the estimation employed in the study is void of issue concerning heteroscedasticity in the error term of the models used in the study.

Discussion of Findings

The investigation carried out in the study to assess the nexus between cooperative society and poverty alleviation in Ekiti state revealed that cooperative societies have over time suffered several critical level of financial and economic challenges that has exerted negative influence on

the sustainability of its finances; the study specifically determined that funds available to cooperative societies are extremely limited, this have constrained the development of most cooperative societies to the level of funds available. Furthermore, findings from the study revealed positive significant impact of cooperative societies on poverty alleviation in Ekiti State with coefficient estimate of 0.917004($p=0.0000<0.05$). This in no doubt approves the significance of cooperative societies and their role in shooting up the standard of living of its members and non-members in the community through the provision of loan facilities, trade credit, encouraging mutual understanding and education among members and non-members, shielding its weak members such as producers and consumers from exploitation. These roles have summed up to increased socioeconomic status and ultimately alleviating poverty in the society.

5.0 Recommendations

Premise on the discoveries made in the study, it can be concluded that truly, cooperative societies have immensely contributed towards alleviating poverty in Ekiti state, this is despite financial challenges causing drawback for cooperative societies especially in recognizing their roles in the society. This in clear terms implies that influence of cooperative societies on poverty alleviation in Ekiti state is positive and significant. Following the conclusion established in the study, the following recommendations are paramount:

- (i) Government through appropriate agencies should provide loans with favorable conditions to cooperative societies so as to alleviate the financial challenges faced by the organization and improve their effectiveness towards poverty reduction.
- (ii) Cooperative societies should also improve on its periodic collection of contribution in reaching adequate finance so as to aid the continuous promotion of member's welfare and societal development.

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